

# The need of a Clinical Skills Learning Centre (CSLC) at Institute of Medicine

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The Clinical Skills Learning Centre is urgently needed in the IOM in response to a number of initiatives in medical education and changing health care policy. The following points are important in this matter:

- Large number of students.
- All essential skills cannot be practiced in real patients.
- Many times real patients are not available
- Is it ethical to practice in real patient without practicing in the available simulators?
- Manikins and computerized simulator are available

Three goals have been defined in medical education: knowledge, skills and attitudes. The survey by Prof. Harrison and his colleagues<sup>1</sup> highlight shortcomings in providing medical students with adequate practical experience and procedural skills before they commence their clinical duties as qualified doctors. If these skills are not acquired in a clinical setting under sub-optimal conditions which may lead to potentially fatal consequences for the patient. The CSLC if established will meet some of the skill and attitudinal objectives and it gives students the opportunity to practice a wide range of practical skills in a stress free environment. This should be supplemented by an emphasis on appropriate communication skills between doctors and patients.

The acquisition of clinical skills is increasingly being assessed throughout the undergraduate course by OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Examination) and the CSLC provides opportunities to practice skills, which will be examined in this way. At present the OSCE is loosely used in the examination, which I believe needs urgent evaluation.

## Types of Materials

The materials that will be used in the skill lab could be divided in two headings. 1. Manikins 2. Computer based simulators. Manikins are costly and are available in two types. The first are simple without computer setting and the other is costly having computer simulators. Computer based simulators are available in CD Rom and is an important tool for self directed learning.

The suggested process for the establishment:

IOM has some simulators in its various department. IOM should make a list of these materials and see how these are being utilized. It is essential to explore the possibility of

keeping these simulators in one place and disseminate the information to the different department so that students can come to the Skill Lab Centre and practice the skills.

Departments that are involved in teaching clinical skills should sit together and identify the essential skills that an undergraduate students must have. Once a list of these skills is identified it should relate with the available resources. Those skills that has been identified as essentials and are presently not available in the IOM to practice should get the priority in getting it. The presently available distributor in Nepal should be explored for the simulators and cost should be analyzed. If the cost cannot be made then prioritization should be done. It will be desirous to visit some skill laboratory that are running in Nepal or neighboring countries. Visiting the third country by the members of the Skill Lab team will increase the cost and it is not feasible to establish the skill lab with their standard. The money could be utilized in purchasing the simulators. Once the concerned persons have acquainted with this concept then the available financial resources should be weighed with the cost of available skill learning material. Before establishing it is essential that either some experts should be consulted or some key members should visit some centre where skill lab is used for medical education. The cost will depend upon the available fund to buy and establish this CSLC. Therefore it is necessary that each faculty should identify the essential skills a medical graduate or nurse should acquire. After listing these skills only one can explore the available simulators around the globe.

## Advantage:

The advantages of CSLC are students will use the facility for self-directed learning in an optimal environment and repeatedly practice it. Workshops can be designed for both single and multi-skilled, where there is a focus on general transferable skills, such as group working, information retrieval, presentation skills and the ability to work within time restraints: all the skills required by medical graduates.

1. Harrison GA, Hillman KM, Fulde GWO, Jacques TC. The need for undergraduate education in critical care. *Anaesth Intensive Care* 1999; **27**:53-58. [PubMed]